

Commercial Building
814 F Street, N.W.
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-213

HABS
DC
WASH
170-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS NO. DC-213

COMMERCIAL BUILDING

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170-

Location: 814 F Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Present Owner: George's Radio and Television Co., Inc.
2850 New York Avenue, N.E.
Washington, D.C.

Present Occupant: George's Radio and Television Co., Inc.

Present Use: Retail store.

Brief Statement of Significance: A post Civil War building illustrating the early commercial development of F Street.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Robert P. Wade, et al., heirs at law of Sophia Peckham, deeded [763-442 rec. Dec. 22, 1874] to Paula Rocca at the cost of \$5,500, part of lot #9, (the east 12'2" front by full depth of lot, with right of way over alley next to west line from front to rear).

In Deed 778-181 rec. Feb. 25, 1875, Thomas W. Johnson, et al. deeded to Paula Rocca on Feb. 3, 1875, part of lot #9 for \$1387.50. (Begin at point 34'8" east of NW corner of lot, thence east 3'2"; south 100', west 3'2", north 100', with right to sewer use of property to west).

Cecilia M. Elliot and Andrew Langdon [782-119--quit claim deed--rec. April 7, 1875] deeded to Paula Rocca at the cost of \$700 for party wall use only, property which begins at NW corner of west wall of the brick building standing partly on the west half of lot 10; thence east 4 1/2" to center line of wall, south 75', west 4 1/2", north 75'.

Building presumed constructed 1875 or 1876 upon property of 3 deeds to Paula Rocca.

In Deed 7495-382 rec. July 10, 1940 Cromelin & Artis, trs. (for heirs of Paula Rocca, deceased Sept. 4, 1907), deeded to George Wasserman on June 18, 1940.

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On November 13, 1946 [8379-495 rec. Nov. 27, 1946]
George Wasserman deeded to Wasserman Properties, Inc.

On July 18, 1962 [11841-303 rec. July 27, 1962]
Wasserman Properties, Inc. deeded to Geo. Wasserman.

The property was deeded to George's Radio & Television
Co., Inc. on July 18, 1962 [11841-307 rec. July 27,
1962] by George Wasserman, et ux.

2. Date of erection: Probably 1875 or 1876.

B. Sources of information:

Primary and unpublished sources: District of Columbia
records.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural interest and merit: A representative commercial building of the 1870's, with interesting details.
2. Condition of fabric: The building is in fair condition with portions of its cornice deteriorating. The majority of its exterior is in its original state.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 15'6" X 75'; 2 bays' 3 stories; rectangular in shape.
2. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls are masonry bearing, the east and west are party walls, shared by the respective adjacent buildings. The north wall (front) is made of brick which is dirty brownish yellow in color. In the center of the wall at the second story level is a circular imprint, probably where an emblem or motif of some kind once rested. In this circular spot, the brick is faded reddish in color which could very possibly have been the original color of the building.

The south wall (rear) is made of brick.

3. Structural systems, framing: Large piers support the upper stories. These piers are in a wood jacket, covered with canvas and painted white.

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4. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: There is no front entrance to this building, due to the fact that the business occupying this building also occupies the adjacent building to the west of it. In this adjacent building is the entrance.
- b. Windows: The first floor front is completely modernized and has an all glass front. The front being two bays wide, a simple double-hung window (1/1) rests in each bay at the second and third stories. The top of the window is segmental and is sheltered by what appears to be cast iron hood mouldings, also segmental in shape and supported by a bracket on either side. The windows are trimmed in wood moulding.

Windows on the south wall are simple, double hung, trimmed with simple wooden mouldings.

5. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof is flat with slight slope running north to south.
- b. Cornice: Across the front of the building at the roof line is the cornice. In the center of the cornice is a pediment supported by two large brackets--one at each end. The pediment, appearing to be made of cast iron, is moulded and has a surface which is stepped inward.

The cornice is relatively plain and extends out at each end to identical brackets which are metal moulded, but which support metal corner blocks. These corner blocks, like the rest of the entablature, are evidently original and are now deteriorating with portions of the block on the right (west) side of the front having rotted away. These blocks terminate the run of the cornice. The cornice on either side of the pediment is supported in the center by a much smaller but similar bracket. In addition, the pediment is supported centrally by three of these smaller brackets.

Below this course of smaller brackets, but coming between the larger brackets which extend down much further, is a moulded band. This band has a rectangular panel with moulded trim between each pair of adjacent brackets.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: In plan, this building is simple. It is rectangular in shape and all interior partitions have been removed to create an entirely open space. Moreover, an opening has been cut in the party wall to allow circulation from the adjacent building. The entire first and second floors have been modernized. Basement is not accessible.
2. Stairways: The stairway is made of wood with fourteen 7" risers and treads approximately 10" deep. The hand rail is moulded wood and because of its worn condition, the stairway is probably original. It is wood brown in color. There are no stairways leading to the second floor from the first floor. Because this building was combined with its adjacent partner to the west, the first floor stairway was probably taken out to allow more space, while access to the second floor was obtained in the adjacent building.
3. Flooring: On the first level, the floor has been elevated and is covered with composition tile (9" squares). Type of construction cannot be positively detected.

The second story floor is also covered with composition tile, but in addition is carpeted partially. There is a slight slope down to floor of adjacent building.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The first floor ceiling is hung and made of cork tile. It is approximately 8'6" high and painted white. This is obviously modern and in no way depicts the original architectural character of the interior of this building.

This is not true of the second floor, however. The ceiling is of sheet metal painted white and approx. 15' in height.

The first floor walls are plaster and are covered in places with wood paneling. The second floor walls are plaster and painted black. There is a 7" wood moulded baseboard on all walls.

5. Doorways and doors: The doors are approximately 2'8" wide and made of wood with two vertical moulded panels. Standing approximately 7' high, the doors are trimmed in wood moulding painted green with corner blocks in some cases. Doors are probably not original.

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An opening on the second floor has wood moulding trim, is 6'6" tall and approximately 15' wide with folding wooden doors. The soffit of all openings is plain and painted green.

6. Mechanical equipment: The building has modern lighting and heating and cooling ducts are visible throughout the first and second stories. Electrical wiring and modern outlets are also visible.

D. Site and Surroundings:

General setting: The building faces north (F Street) with adjacent buildings to the east and west.

[Note: The adjacent building to the west of this building combines with it to house a single business. Consequently, the interior re-decorating is similar in each building]

Prepared by: Thomas L. Fauntleroy
Student Architect
National Park Service
June 1969

Addendum

812 F Street, NW (Commercial Building)
Washington
District of Columbia

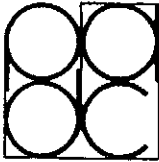
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PENNSYLVANIA
AVENUE
DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION
425 13TH STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, DC 20004

GENERAL CONSULTANTS

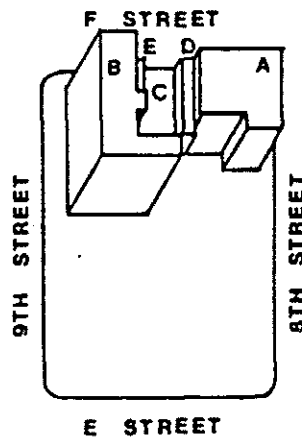
ANDERSON NOTTER / MARIANI
GENERAL PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT
DEVROUX & PURNELL
ASSOCIATE ARCHITECTS
DAVID MCLAREN HART & ASSOCIATES
PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION CONSULTANT
MONK DUNSTONE ASSOCIATES
COST ESTIMATING CONSULTANT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

BUILDING DOCUMENTATION

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Commercial Building
812 F Street, NW
Lot 808



GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This two-bay three-story High Victorian commercial building occupies a sixteen foot by one hundred foot site on F Street. Its contiguous neighbors are the three-and-one-half story LeDroit Building and a similarly scaled two-story building to the west. A three-story-plus-basement section extends back forty-eight feet from F Street; a two-story addition extends another forty feet; and a one-story portion extends the final twelve feet. The upper floors of the street facade, which are of yellow-painted red brick, feature molded cast-iron window hoods on consoles and a massive bracketed and pedimented cornice. The ground floor features a modern storefront, which is shared with the adjacent Adams Building.

The building's ground floor and second floor are showrooms for George's Radio and Television Company; both are reached from the adjacent building. The third floor, which is partitioned into several rooms, is connected by a staircase to the second floor. It is currently used for storage.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

812 F Street is an example of a straightforward commercial building embellished by exuberant High Victorian detailing. Its bold window hoods are classically detailed but have an elevation that is straight at the ends and segmentally curved over the window. These and the massive cornice with its large and small brackets, its succession of moldings, its paneled surfaces, and its central pediment are representative of the desire for aggressively three-dimensional form that was characteristic of various styles of the era.

The lot for the building was assembled in 1875, but the building was apparently not built until 1881 (Permit #727, 1/31/1881). The two-story addition apparently dates from the following year (Permit #762, 12/28/1882).

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

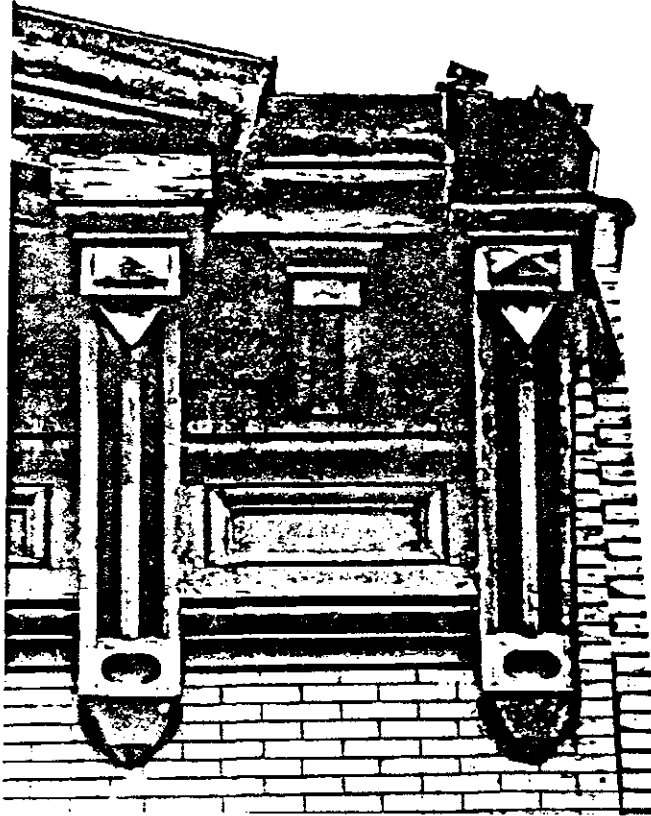
Cornice: The building's bold cornice is constructed of wood. A molded pediment is located at the center, supported by two large brackets, one at each end. The similarly molded cornice extends out at each end to identical brackets that support corner blocks. These corner blocks, like the rest of the entablature, are evidently original and are now deteriorating with portions of the block on the right (west) side of the front having rotted away. These blocks terminate the run of the cornice. The cornice on either side of the pediment is supported in the center by a much smaller but similar bracket. In addition, the pediment is supported centrally by three of these smaller brackets. Below this course of smaller brackets, located between the larger brackets which extend down much further, is the architrave, framed above and below by horizontal moldings. Between each pair of large brackets is a recessed rectangular panel with molded trim.



PARTIAL VIEW OF NORTH
FACADE



F STREET (NORTH) FACADE



NORTH FACADE:
DETAIL OF CORNICE



NORTH FACADE: DETAIL OF WINDOW HOOD

Lot 9 East (Sublot 808)
812 F Street

Sublot 808, the eastern part of original Lot 9, has dimensions of approximately 15'-8" x 100'.

1819.....Lot 9 was assessed to Moses Young.

1824.....Lot 9 (as yet undivided) was owned by Timothy King and worth \$447.00. \$450.00 in improvements were assessed.

1826.....Abigail King received the title to Lot 9.

1829.....Tax assessment records show that the lot had been divided. The smaller eastern portion was one-quarter of the total. It was owned by John R. Mourse.

1844.....The lot was assessed a value of \$373.00 in the name of Abigail King's heirs and William Wilson.

1859.....Lot 9 was assessed, in totality, for \$3,750.00. The owners were unchanged.

1864.....Lot 9, again undivided, had risen in value to \$8,691.00.

1870.....The records again show an east-west division of Lot 9. No owner was listed for the eastern portion, which was valued at \$700.00.

1876.....Charles D. Willard, a lawyer, was the first person listed in the City Directory at 812 F Street.

1878/79...Paula Rocca had assumed ownership of the eastern portion of Lot 9, which measured approximately 15' in width. A \$4,125.00 value was assessed.

By now several tenants were listed in the City Directories at 812 F Street. They included: Charles H. Fowler, patent agent; J. Bradley Adams, books and periodicals; The American Watchman Newspaper; John Williams, claim agent; Benjamin Severson, civil engineer; A.R. Hodgkin & Brother, eating saloon; W.H. Gleason, lawyer; and C.A. Snow & Co., patent attorneys. None of these tenants remained more than two years.

1880.....On February 10, 1880, John B. Rocca secured a permit to build a one-story brick addition to the rear of the building, to be used as an eating house. Clifford B. Cutter was the occupant listed on the permit (Building Permit #943, 2/10/1880, cost: \$75.00). Later in the year, a permit was granted to S.K. Foresyth to build a show window with doors on each side (Building Permit #672, 12/6/1800).

1883/B4...Paula Rocca's lot appreciated slightly to \$4,271.00. John W. Beall took over operation of the eating house.

1885
to

1892.....The eating house saw a succession of operators: John W. Beall in 1885, Joseph M. Patterson from 1886 to 1887, Edward Gillingham from 1890 to 1891, and Plummer & Morris in 1892.

1889.....A Mrs. "Roco" (probably Rocca) obtained a permit to make interior repairs and insert iron girders in the rear (Building Permit #1765, 4/17/1889).

1892.....James Tharp applied for a permit to build a show window for "Tharp's Restaurant" (Building Permit #2715, 6/15/1892, cost: \$1,900.00). Richardson & Burgess were the builders.

1893
to

1894.....The lot was still owned by Paula Rocca. The ground was assessed for \$6,939.00. A \$3,500.00 improvement was also assessed. In 1893 James Tharp took over operation of the restaurant and opened a wine and liquor store.

1899/

1900.....There was no change in ownership or ground value. \$3,000.00 were assessed for improvements.

1902.....James Tharp's sons took over his establishment.

1903.....The name Vienna Dining & Lunch Rooms appeared in the Directory.

1908.....W.G. Tharp obtained a permit to alter the show window and put in a new

door and transom. The structure was described as a three-story brick and tin store, 60' deep (Building Permit #4092, 6/20/1908).

Israel Kates sold watches and jewelry, according to the City Directory.

1909

to

1917.....James Tharp's sons continued to be listed at 812 F Street.

1913.....Harry Horovitz, an upholsterer, was a tenant in the building for one year.

1919.....A.D. Siachos was operating the restaurant. The designation "Lot 808" first appeared on this subplot of original Lot 9 (Baist Plat Map, 1919).

1921

to

1922.....Michael G. and Esther E. Pressler ran the restaurant.

1924

to

1943.....Philip Franks was listed periodically in the City Directories as a jeweler and watchmaker. Other names were also listed throughout the years without professions; they were probably residents of the upper floors.

1948

to

1956.....Philip Franks was replaced by the Scott Jewelry Co., Inc.

1960

to

1979.....The building was taken over by George's Radio & Television Co., which expanded from 814-816 F Street.

SOURCES

Baist Real Estate Atlas

Bastert and Enthoffer Plat Maps

Boyd's City Directories

District of Columbia Building Permits

District of Columbia General Assessment Records

District of Columbia Recorder of Deeds

District of Columbia Surveyor's Office Records

District of Columbia Tax Records

Hopkins Real Estate Atlas

Polk's City Directories

Property Map for Downtown Urban Renewal Area for District of Columbia Redevelopment
Land Agency

Sanborn Insurance Map